Saskatchewan
Learning

Supporting English Language Arts Renewal at the Elementary Level (K-5)

An Information Bulletin

Recycled Paper

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Purpose of Bulletin

The effective renewal of an area of study requires the commitment and support of a number of people. This bulletin is designed to provide information and assistance to administrators, classroom teachers, and other school division personnel associated with the renewal of the Elementary Level English language arts curriculum. Support for the renewal process is also available through a provincial group of regional renewal facilitators.

Curriculum Renewal

In 1984, *Directions* identified English language arts (ELA) as one of the Required Areas of Study for all kindergarten to grade 12 students. *Directions* recommended that 560 minutes per week be devoted to English language arts at the Elementary Level (Grades 1-5).

Since *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* and its accompanying bibliography were introduced to Saskatchewan schools in 1992, a number of activities have been undertaken by Saskatchewan Learning. Some of these activities are described below.

- Provincial Learning Assessments collected data in 1994 and 1996 on Saskatchewan grade 5, 8, and 11 students' reading and writing performance, and in 1998 on grade 5, 8, and 11 students' listening and speaking performance. These assessments identified areas of student strength and areas where students could improve (e.g., while students can make judgements about their reading, they are not experienced at expressing their reasoning in writing).

- Saskatchewan Learning, along with the departments of education in the other western provinces and three territories, collaborated to produce a Common Curriculum Framework for K-12 English Language Arts (1998). This framework identifies common language arts outcomes for each grade level and, as a related project, identifies resources that reflect Western Canadian content to help students listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent more effectively. Saskatchewan's commitment is to ensure that provincial ELA curricula reflect the Western Canadian Protocol framework outcomes.

- In 1998, Saskatchewan Learning conducted an evaluation to determine the extent of curriculum implementation. The *ELA 1-5 Curriculum Evaluation Report* (1999) concluded that:
  - there is widespread support for the ELA curriculum.
  - there is extensive evidence of the curriculum being implemented; however, implementation is uneven and appears to be related to strong, positive administrative support.

- a balanced approach and a focus on meaning making has many positive results for students.
- skill acquisition needs to be addressed further – clearer articulation of skills objectives and more specific guidance in the teaching of skills are needed.
- teachers need further help with evaluation, resource collections, and ways to respond to student diversity.

- In 2000, Saskatchewan Learning published *Early Literacy: A Resource for Teachers* to support teachers of emerging literacy learners (pre-K to grade two). The resource provides diagnostic tools to help teachers clarify the language needs of children and specific instructional activities to respond to these needs. In addition, suggestions are given to teachers who have students in grades 3-5 still in the emerging phase of literacy learning (i.e., ideas for "older students"). Many of the ideas from *Early Literacy are* incorporated into the renewed curriculum. However, teachers should continue to refer to *Early Literacy* for detailed descriptions of instructional methods and activities that support students' early literacy development related to oral language, textual foundations, graphophonic foundations, and independent reading and writing.

- Saskatchewan Learning (in conjunction with teachers, educational administrators, trustees, parents, and others) has been reviewing the needs and procedures related to effective implementation and ongoing renewal of Core Curriculum. It has been determined that support is needed on a variety of fronts in order to ensure that areas of study and supporting initiatives advocated in Core Curriculum come to life (or are "actualized") in the classroom and are renewed in a timely and ongoing manner. Refer to *Actualization of Core Curriculum* (1999) for the policy framework that guides the provincial educational partners in their shared efforts to bring Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum to life in the classroom. Refer to *Classroom Curriculum Connections (2001)* for a model for teacher-directed professional development in relation to Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum.

The renewed *English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level* (2002) and its accompanying bibliography address the findings and recommendations of various groups. These groups include a provincial curriculum reference committee, an internal program team, and more than 200 field test teachers and consultants from all regions of the province. Their feedback was used to provide an effective, balanced, and renewed language arts program for Elementary Level students.

The renewed curriculum guide includes:

- objectives for each grade level in each of the language strands (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing)
- sample assessment and evaluation tools for classroom teachers to find out what students know and can do at each phase of their language learning
- suggested instructional strategies for each language strand and phase of language learning
- suggestions for teaching the language conventions associated with phonemic awareness, graphophonics, spelling, sentence structures, punctuation, and handwriting
- sample classroom routines, units, and lists of resources that support teachers in addressing the objectives for each grade level.

A new bibliography accompanies the renewed ELA curriculum guide. The accompanying bibliography includes a range of resources to support the curriculum including:

- major integrated resources
- trade books
- multimedia resources
- language study resources
- professional resources.

Curriculum Overview

The renewed English language arts curriculum emphasizes the role of language in communication and learning. Students need to become confident and competent users of all six language arts strands through many opportunities to listen and speak, read and write, and view and represent. Specific learning objectives are listed in the renewed guide to help teachers address each language strand and to build a balanced ELA program in their classrooms. A balanced program:

- focuses on language and emphasizes the communication and construction of meaning
- recognizes the interrelated and interdependent nature of the language strands (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, representing) – ability in one area strengthens and supports growth in the other areas
- integrates and balances experiences with all the language strands

- creates meaningful contexts, purposeful activities, and a supportive environment for students to learn the language skills and strategies
- employs a range of effective teaching-learning approaches and strategies including direct instruction, guided instruction, and independent activities, and models the before/during/after skills and strategies that effective communicators use
- uses appropriate assessment, evaluation, and reporting procedures
- attends to all the language cueing systems (i.e., pragmatic, textual, syntactical, semantic, and graphophonic) as well as the conventions and rules of language usage in a whole, to part, to whole context
- helps students understand and access a range of resources (including prose fiction and non-fiction, poetry, plays, non-print, and human resources)
- builds on what students know and can do with language and helps them develop a sense of confidence and capability.

Objectives

The purpose of the English language arts program is to help students develop competence and confidence as language users. In English language arts at the Elementary Level, students should:

- Listen to, read, and view a range of grade-level appropriate oral, print, and other media texts in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes; and speak, write, and represent to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences.

- Learn about and practise the skills and strategies of effective listeners, speakers, readers, writers, viewers, and representers.

- Assess their own personal language growth and set goals for future growth.

The learning objectives listed in the renewed ELA Elementary Level curriculum guide describe the specific language knowledge, skills, and strategies that students should develop. The objectives in each language strand form a developmental continuum and guide the teacher in planning units, daily instruction, and classroom activities. The objectives also give direction to guide student assessment and evaluation.

Contexts

The renewed Elementary Level curriculum advocates a unit approach to instruction. In addition to planning daily routines, teachers are asked to develop different types of units that address the personal, social, imaginative, communicative, and environmental contexts. Sample unit themes and topics are listed within these contexts in Appendix A.

In addition to considering the five contexts, teachers are encouraged to organize the school year by planning approximately four to six units of three different types:

- Multi-genre thematic units built around a theme or topic that include a range of prose, poetry, and plays.
- Multi-genre inquiry units built around a theme or topic that is related to an important question that students have about the topic. These units are usually interdisciplinary.
- Genre study or author study units focusing on a specific genre (e.g., the folktale) or a particular author or illustrator.

Sample grade level and multi-grade level units are included in the curriculum guide. Suggested minimum guidelines for number of units and unit types are also included.

Type of Unit	Minimum Number
Thematic units	3 per grade
Inquiry units	1 per grade
Author or genre study units	1 per grade

It is important that units are developed to address both the needs, interests, and strengths of students and the curriculum objectives. Sample planning forms are provided in the curriculum guide to help teachers with their unit and yearly planning.

Instructional Approaches and Guidelines

Descriptions of a range of instructional approaches to teach the language arts are provided. Key strategies used in the before, during, and after phases of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing are included in the curriculum guide as well as specific strategies and expectations for language conventions such as phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary development, spelling, and handwriting. In addition, teachers are asked to consider five broad instructional guidelines:

- Plan language arts units and lessons that incorporate all the language art strands.
- Plan lessons that focus on meaning.
- Provide supports for each stage of students' language learning.
- Model and discuss key strategies for using the language arts.
- Use a range of instructional approaches to help move students from teacher-supported and guided lessons to independent learning activities that require a minimum of teacher support and guidance.

Assessment and Evaluation

Various strategies and techniques for assessing and evaluating students' language development and competence are provided in the renewed curriculum guide. In addition to sample assessment tools and forms designed for teacher and student use, teachers are encouraged to build student language profiles and to recognize what students know and can do as listeners, speakers, readers, writers, viewers, and representers as they progress through each phase of language learning. Student progress reporting is discussed and sample student progress reports are included in the renewed curriculum.

Roles within Curriculum Renewal

Administrators and classroom teachers have a shared and important responsibility in helping students become "literate individuals who are competent and confident in using language for both functional and aesthetic purposes" (*English Language Arts: A Curriculum Guide for the Elementary Level*, Saskatchewan Education, 2002, p. 3). Discussion and reflection about the roles within curriculum renewal assume that schools and school divisions are committed to actualizing the renewed Elementary Level English language arts curriculum in their classrooms.

Role of Administrators

As educational leaders, administrators are key to successful curriculum renewal. Administrators facilitate the curriculum renewal process by having knowledge of the curriculum, supporting resources, and the change process. In general, it is helpful if administrators:

- understand the general intent and principles that underlie the renewed curriculum for the Elementary Level English language arts program

- understand that renewal requires time and commitment
- develop a plan for supporting renewal
- ensure that teachers have an opportunity to participate in a variety of professional development opportunities (see Appendix B)
- inform students, parents, and the broader school community of the philosophy, goals, and methods of the renewed curriculum
- recognize the role of appropriate resources in an English language arts classroom and ensure that the school division resource selection policy reflects Saskatchewan Learning initiatives and guidelines
- consider how the assessment and evaluation suggestions in the renewed curriculum affect the school's policy and reporting of student progress
- support teachers who wish to expand their repertoire of instructional strategies and methods related to language arts instruction
- review and discuss regularly with teachers their insights and needs related to English language arts instruction
- share information (particularly curriculum and resource updates) with teachers
- attend, when possible, professional development opportunities related to English language arts curriculum and instruction.

A checklist for In-school Administrators focused on supporting the renewal of English language arts is found in Appendix C.

Role of Classroom Teachers

The renewed curriculum encourages teachers to plan for and model effective language arts instruction including:

- attending to each of the six language arts as well as integrating them
- emphasizing the communication and construction of meaning
- teaching skills and strategies that effective communicators use
- creating meaningful contexts, purposeful activities, and a supportive environment for students to learn language knowledge, skills, and strategies
- using (and having students create) a range of texts in a variety of genres
- modeling the before/during/after skills and strategies that effective communicators use
- attending to and teaching language conventions and mechanics
- attending to content, process, and product
- providing consistent and ongoing feedback to students.

New teachers, and teachers new to English language arts, as well as experienced teachers of English language arts will need time and opportunities to develop an awareness, to explore, and to become knowledgeable about and adopt classroom practices that reflect the philosophy and expectations outlined in the renewed curriculum guide. While individual teachers will be at different stages in their understanding and comfort with the teaching of English language arts, they will find the sample teacher checklists provided in the renewed curriculum and the reflection guide provided in Appendix D of this bulletin useful to reflect on their strengths and needs in developing plans for action.

Role of Renewal Facilitators

Saskatchewan Learning has selected and provided professional development for teachers in each educational region of the province in order to support the renewal of English language arts at the Elementary Level. The role of these teachers is to:

- understand the philosophy and practices advocated in the renewed curriculum in order to be a school division resource
- facilitate a range of professional development opportunities designed to meet the needs of schools and school divisions in renewing ELA programming
- promote the curriculum in their respective schools, school divisions, and professional development sessions
- become a mentor for ELA teachers
- provide feedback to Saskatchewan Learning on future professional development needs in their region.

Role of Parents

Administrators and teachers need to acquaint parents with the renewed Elementary Level English language arts curriculum guide, including its aim, goals, and objectives and its philosophy, content, and approach. In order to facilitate awareness and understanding of the English language arts curriculum, information such as the sample parent newsletter found in Appendix E of this bulletin may guide discussions or presentations during parent awareness sessions or may be included as a component in a parent information package.

Professional Development

Beginning in 2002, administrators, teachers, and others had the opportunity to attend professional development sessions to learn about the renewed Elementary Level English language arts curriculum guide. It is anticipated that professional development opportunities will be provided annually at the provincial and local level to support the effective implementation and ongoing renewal of English language arts for grades 1–5. See Appendix B for ideas related to local professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

Actualization of Core Curriculum, and specifically English language arts, will happen only through the participation and involvement of many different people: students, teachers, parents and caregivers, Elders, administrators, trustees, and other community members. These people make the difference in the success of any educational undertaking. All actualization activity should be based on the recognition that curriculum documents and initiatives become meaningful only when they become part of a school community. It is the people in each school community who are in the best position to plan and take responsibility for the continuous renewal of Core Curriculum, including English language arts programming.

Appendix A: Sample Themes and Topics for English Language Arts Units

Contexts	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Personal and Philosophical Context (could be integrated with health education, arts education, mathematics, physical education)	**All About Me** Feelings Safety My favourite things	Fears My body Hobbies	Wishes and dreams My emotions Friends/foes My responsibilities Safety at home Role models Making choices	Family tree I am unique Leisure time activities My relationships with others School life Feelings	**Heroes** Growing up Street kids Accomplishments What I believe Learning from stories
Social, Cultural, and Historical Context (could be integrated with social studies, arts education, health education)	New friends Family Home is where the heart is Neighbourhood Playground Outdoor activities	**Friends and Friendships** Our community Life in the Community Communities of the past Homes The spirit of giving	Comparing communities Cities Legends (genre) Elders Biographies (genre)	Pastimes Cultures and celebrations Prairie life Life in northern Saskatchewan Saskatchewan place names Local issues	I am Canadian My peers Historical fiction (genre) Stepping back in time Diaries Early exploration
Imaginative and Literary Context (could be integrated with arts education, social studies, science)	Rhymes (genre) Fairy tales (genre) Imaginary creatures Little critters Illustrator study Storytelling What if ...	Surprise endings Monsters and giants If I were ... Do you believe it? Author study Fables (genre) Humour in print	**Folktales** (genre) Poetry (genre) Knights and castles Space Space crafts Make believe and magic Author study	Tall tales (genre) Fables (genre) Inventions Dreams Lost in space Author study Trickster tales Legendary creatures	Autobiography (genre) Mysteries (genre) Myth and legend (genre) Glimpses of other worlds The future Fantasy Author study
Communicative Context (could be integrated with arts education, mathematics, social studies)	The telephone Special days and celebrations Signs and symbols	Nonsense Play on words Special friends Advertisements on TV for children (genre - media studies)	Sound Electronic and mechanical sounds Magazines for children (genre - media studies) The power of television Communicating electronically	**So Why are You Laughing?** Multicultural mosaic Words and pictures Advertising (genre - media studies)	Origins of language Visual storytelling Values and messages on the WWW (genre - media studies) Oral literature Signs and symbols
Environmental Context (could be integrated with science, arts education, mathematics, health education)	Animals Farm Animals Amazing animals Plants and trees The senses Forms Food Motion Conservation	Weather Air and water Plant growth Creepy crawlers Dinosaurs Magnets	Endangered animals Animal growth Earth Day and night Think green Farming The sky The senses Turtles	Habitats Light Predicting weather Rocks and fossils Insects and spiders Metamorphosis Recycling	Matter and its changes Machines and work Bridges Bones and artifacts Oceans Hunting and fishing

Themes and topics highlighted in bold type are developed in the curriculum guide as sample units.

Appendix B: Professional Development Suggestions

Allow time for change to take place and plan opportunities for dialogue and action planning.

1. **Self-reflect.** Teachers are encouraged to reflect upon their philosophy of English language arts, instruction, and learning. They might use a checklist or self-reflection guide (samples provided in the curriculum and in Appendix D of this bulletin) or jot down thoughts and reflections in a journal, log, or daybook. What aspects of English language arts instruction do they feel comfortable with and what aspects would they like to learn or change? *Classroom Curriculum Connections* (Saskatchewan Education, 2001) also provides guidelines and practical tools for curriculum reflection activities.

2. **Focus on specific areas for change and set specific goals.** As individuals or as a staff, teachers can avoid the feeling of being overwhelmed because there are so many things to do or try. Deciding on a focus for the year and concentrating energies and attention on specific aspects of language arts instruction can result in concrete change and move individuals or staffs to refine and improve their use of the renewed curriculum. *Classroom Curriculum Connections* (Saskatchewan Education, 2001) provides guidelines and practical tools for curriculum inquiry activities.

3. **Plan specific workshops.** Plan hands-on workshops for half or whole days, focusing on a language, assessment, or instructional issue, skill, or strategy; on planning effective units or lessons; or on exchanging ideas, instructional strategies, or resources. After an idea, skill, strategy, unit, or resource has been tried and put into practice, plan follow-up workshops to address refinement and evolving needs.

4. **Network with other teachers.** Being part of a teacher network can be one of the most rewarding activities that individuals can engage in to further their professional development. Identify colleagues in the school or neighbouring schools who might be interested in discussing the renewed curriculum, its challenges, their successes, and their concerns about instruction. Find the time to meet (e.g., once a month) to discuss these areas. *Classroom Curriculum Connections* (Saskatchewan Education, 2001) provides guidelines and practical tools for curriculum networking activities.

5. **Jointly plan and exchange instructional units.** Jointly plan or exchange units of study that address the renewed ELA objectives and contexts. Keep the focus on objectives and on specific elements of unit planning such as instruction, assessment and evaluation, or resources.

6. **Prepare resource moments, book talks, or resource boxes.** Set aside five or ten minutes of each staff meeting for a brief resource moment or book talk about a new professional or student resource. Add the new resource to a box that includes additional resources about a similar topic. Circulate these among colleagues in the school or among several schools. Including an evaluation or comment sheet for each resource allows teachers to give their responses and for others to decide if this is a resource that would be useful for them.

7. **Plan for lunch hour or staff meeting videos.** Set aside time for teachers to view and discuss professional videos on English language arts instruction or videos that might be used with students. Viewing guides for students could also be developed at these meetings.

8. **Involve parents and other members of the community.** Plan an orientation session for parents and other members of the community who are interested in English language arts instruction. Discuss the goals and philosophy of the curriculum. Give participants some hands-on experience with the strategies advocated by the curriculum. Encourage participants to look through some of the resources that are used with students.

Appendix C: Administrator's Checklist for Supporting Elementary English Language Arts Renewal

As educational leaders, in-school administrators are key to the successful implementation and ongoing renewal of curricula. Administrators can facilitate the renewal process associated with the Elementary Level English language arts curriculum by having knowledge of the curriculum, the associated resources, the change process and strategies to assist teachers with implementing the curriculum.

To support the use of the renewed Elementary Level English language arts curriculum, I:

1. ___ ensure that students in our school receive adequate instruction time (i.e., 560 minutes per week or approximately 110 minutes per day).
2. ___ ensure that each teacher has a copy of the renewed curriculum guide (January 2002), access to the accompanying bibliography (September 2001) and subsequent updates, and a copy of this information bulletin.
3. ___ ensure that I understand the philosophy, objectives, content, and instructional, assessment, and evaluation approaches associated with this curriculum and discuss with teachers the extent to which they are familiar with the intent of the curriculum and the kind of support they need to deliver it.
4. ___ ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are allocated to support achievement of the curriculum objectives.
5. ___ inform parents/boards/community members about the ELA curriculum, its philosophy, content, and approach.
6. ___ support the development of a strong collection of print and non-print resources for students and teachers including major integrated resources, trade books, language resources, and professional resources.
7. ___ ensure that the school division resource selection policy reflects Saskatchewan Learning initiatives and guidelines, and recognizes the resource needs of an English language arts classroom.
8. ___ create an environment of trust and support to facilitate the stages that individual teachers will progress through in becoming familiar with the renewed curriculum.
9. ___ support teachers in expanding their repertoire of instructional and assessment approaches and in taking risks necessary when trying something new.
10. ___ support teachers in integrating the Common Essential Learnings, Gender Equity, and Aboriginal and Multicultural content and perspectives into their program as well as utilizing the Adaptive Dimension as appropriate.
11. ___ ensure that teachers have an appropriate means for providing information about student progress.
12. ___ ensure that school reporting forms reflect the philosophy of ELA.
13. ___ provide and encourage ongoing professional development and opportunities for teaching English language arts, including time to meet and plan with other ELA teachers.
14. ___ support teachers in using processes such as those described in *Classroom Curriculum Connections* (Saskatchewan Education. 2001) that foster reflection, inquiry, or networking related to the English language arts curriculum.

Appendix D: A Sample Teacher Self-reflection Guide to support the Renewal of English Language Arts

The following continuum is designed to help teachers reflect upon the learning and teaching of English language arts. The awareness, exploration, synthesis, and refinement categories of the continuum are intended to describe the implementation of a curriculum as a process that occurs over time. Movement across the categories is not a linear process but a recursive one. As teachers explore a particular aspect of a curriculum, they may achieve a new or deeper awareness. This awareness may cause teachers to move into other areas of exploration. It is anticipated that as teachers work with these self-reflection guides, more appropriate tools may be developed at the local level to support teaching and learning related to English language arts.

Space is provided for teachers to make notes as they work through the self-reflection guide and a section is found at the end of the guide to help teachers reflect upon and summarize their personal and professional achievements and plans.

To achieve effective teaching and learning in English language arts, I . . .

Key Components of the ELA Curriculum	Awareness Understand the curriculum and have knowledge to teach it	Exploration Use the curriculum and experiment in some areas of teaching	Synthesis Adapt teaching to help students achieve curriculum objectives	Refinement Fine-tune and improve use of the curriculum
Curriculum Philosophy and Principles	❑ attend a professional development session and read the curriculum ❑ am aware of and understand the curriculum philosophy and principles ❑ am aware of the six language strands (speaking, listening, writing, reading, representing, viewing)	❑ reflect the philosophy and principles of the curriculum in units and daily instruction ❑ strive for an integrated and balanced program that includes time for speaking, listening, writing, reading, representing, and viewing ❑ provide opportunities for parents and guardians to become familiar with the basic principles and practices of ELA	❑ integrate speaking, writing, representing, listening, reading, and viewing content and processes in authentic ways ❑ increase opportunities for use of oral, print, and other media texts and activities	❑ provide a language-rich environment – one that is filled with things to write with, listen to, talk about, view, and read ❑ create an environment in which students collaborate, co-operate, and feel safe taking risks ❑ plan for the balanced integration of the language processes
Notes to Self				

Key Components of the ELA Curriculum	**Awareness** Understand the curriculum and have knowledge to teach it	**Exploration** Use the curriculum and experiment in some areas of teaching	**Synthesis** Adapt teaching to help students achieve curriculum objectives	**Refinement** Fine-tune and improve use of the curriculum
Aim, Goals, Objectives, and Language Concepts	❑ am aware of the aim, goals, and objectives for speaking, listening, writing, reading, representing, and viewing as well as the language concepts for each grade level I teach	❑ plan for and teach to the objectives outlined in the sample unit(s) ❑ review and note students' strengths and needs for subsequent lessons ❑ attend to and provide specific instruction in language concepts in relevant and meaningful contexts ❑ use a whole, to part, to whole approach when teaching the language cues and conventions	❑ use student needs, learning objectives, and key language concepts to guide planning and assessment of learning ❑ attend to specific objectives and language concepts that need review and reinforcement for particular students ❑ integrate language study concepts and skills through individual, small group, and whole class instruction and relevant mini-lessons ❑ am knowledgeable about the language development of the students I teach and the implications of this for my instruction	❑ continually strive to enhance and extend student experiences to help students achieve the objectives for the grade level(s) I teach and, ultimately, the aim and goals of ELA ❑ engage students in meaningful language use and application ❑ use integrated language study lessons effectively with individuals, small groups, and the whole class
Notes to Self				

Key Components of the ELA Curriculum	Awareness Understand the curriculum and have knowledge to teach it	Exploration Use the curriculum and experiment in some areas of teaching	Synthesis Adapt teaching to help students achieve curriculum objectives	Refinement Fine-tune and improve use of the curriculum
Units of Study	❑ understand the differences among a thematic, inquiry, and author/genre unit ❑ read and reflect upon the nature of the sample units in the curriculum	❑ use the sample unit(s) provided ❑ plan a subsequent unit(s) to address the curriculum objectives	❑ plan new units to address course objectives and reflect students' needs, experiences, and interests	❑ plan new and challenging units, that meet the objectives and the needs of the students and that reflect the curriculum philosophy and principles
Instruction	❑ understand the range of instructional methods recommended for achieving the speaking, listening, writing, reading, representing, and viewing objectives and helping students understand the key language concepts	❑ try the suggested instructional methods within the sample unit(s) ❑ begin to incorporate new instructional methods into my teaching repertoire ❑ employ a before (activating), during (acquiring), and after (applying) paradigm when appropriate ❑ use a variety of instructional methods ❑ read to students daily from a variety of good quality poetry, fiction, and nonfiction books ❑ incorporate daily writing	❑ observe students to determine instructional needs and methods ❑ employ mini-lessons based on students' needs ❑ help students apply the strategies they have learned to new situations ❑ ensure that students have knowledge, strategies, and opportunities to access, create, and communicate ideas and information ❑ continue to incorporate new instructional methods into my teaching repertoire	❑ start where students are and scaffold their learning to help them achieve next steps ❑ select instructional methods that are most suited to learning objectives and to the students' needs, interests, and strengths ❑ continually enhance my repertoire and use of instructional methods that support student learning
Notes to Self				

Key Components of the ELA Curriculum	Awareness Understand the curriculum and have knowledge to teach it	Exploration Use the curriculum and experiment in some areas of teaching	Synthesis Adapt teaching to help students achieve curriculum objectives	Refinement Fine-tune and improve use of the curriculum
Assessment and Evaluation	❑ understand the range of assessment techniques that are recommended in the curriculum ❑ become aware that content, process, and product are evaluated in English language arts	❑ try the assessment techniques suggested in the curriculum ❑ begin to incorporate new assessment techniques into my repertoire ❑ plan appropriate assessment and evaluation techniques for each unit ❑ use varied assessment data to form an adequate view of students' progress ❑ discuss objectives for units of study and individual assignments and how they will be assessed and evaluated with students	❑ use a variety of assessment and evaluation techniques related to stated objectives and instructional activities ❑ design assessment and evaluation techniques and strategies based on the objectives, instruction, and observation of students ❑ continue to incorporate new assessment and evaluation techniques into my repertoire ❑ discuss and develop assessment criteria and evaluation weighting with students	❑ use and vary assessment and evaluation techniques that reflect the learning objectives, instructional methods, and student activities and strengths ❑ adapt assessment techniques or design alternate assessment activities that allow students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways ❑ support students in determining assessment criteria and evaluating their own work/progress ❑ provide opportunities for student choice and input into the evaluation process ❑ continually enhance my repertoire and use of assessment and evaluation techniques
Notes to Self				

Key Components of the ELA Curriculum	**Awareness** Understand the curriculum and have knowledge to teach it	**Exploration** Use the curriculum and experiment in some areas of teaching	**Synthesis** Adapt teaching to help students achieve curriculum objectives	**Refinement** Fine-tune and improve use of the curriculum
Resources	❑ realize my responsibility in selecting and using resources that support students as they work toward achieving learning objectives from the curriculum ❑ know that a copy of the bibliography and updates of learning resource materials are sent to each school, available from the LRDC, and posted on the Saskatchewan Learning web site ❑ know how to use the bibliography	❑ know the school division material selection policy ❑ gather existing resources and evaluate them to decide which ones can be used to support student achievement of curriculum objectives ❑ gather existing resources, and order new print and non-print resources featured in sample units and listed in the bibliography and updates of learning resource materials	❑ evaluate, acquire, and use a variety of appropriate and engaging resources that reflect and build upon students' experiences and abilities ❑ help students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to find and use a variety of resources ❑ become familiar with new resources that reflect a range of authors, protagonists, cultures, backgrounds, and communities	❑ use (and encourage students to explore) a variety of resources, including human resources and web sites that support student achievement of objectives and address student abilities and interests ❑ select new resources in consultation with peers, teacher-librarians, and students and within the guidelines of the school division selection policy ❑ draw upon community resources for in-school and out-of-school learning related to English language arts
Notes to Self				

Key Components of the ELA Curriculum	**Awareness** Understand the curriculum and have knowledge to teach it	**Exploration** Use the curriculum and experiment in some areas of teaching	**Synthesis** Adapt teaching to help students achieve curriculum objectives	**Refinement** Fine-tune and improve use of the curriculum
Reflective Practice and Professional Development	❑ reflect on personal practice and teaching strategies ❑ review *Classroom Curriculum Connections* (2001) and focus on pertinent sections related to Curriculum Reflection, Curriculum Inquiry, and/or Curriculum Networking	❑ reflect on teaching philosophy, practices, and assess own professional needs ❑ use a process, such as the Curriculum Reflection process in *Classroom Curriculum Connections*, to reflect on my beliefs, my students, the ELA curriculum, and my school/community context ❑ consult with colleagues and resource people	❑ develop a professional growth plan that targets areas of personal need related to the teaching of ELA ❑ use a process, such as the Curriculum Reflection, Curriculum Inquiry, or Curriculum Networking process in *Classroom Curriculum Connections*, to achieve the goals of my professional growth plan	❑ model the practices of a reflective practitioner ❑ develop a personal professional growth plan that supports the teaching of a comprehensive ELA program ❑ use a process, such as Curriculum Networking in *Classroom Curriculum Connections*, to work on areas of mutual interest with my colleagues ❑ provide mentoring support for my colleagues
Notes to Self				

English Language Arts Reflection

After reflecting on my teaching using this reflection guide,

I have discovered ...

I acknowledge that I am doing well in (I can celebrate) ...

I will take action in the current school year to ...

My long term goals include ...

Appendix E: Parents/Caregivers as Partners

Administrators and teachers need to acquaint parents with the renewed Elementary Level English language arts curriculum guide, including its aim, goals, and objectives and its philosophy, content, and approaches. In order to facilitate awareness and understanding of the English language arts curriculum, information such as the following may guide discussions or presentations during parent awareness sessions or could be included as a component in a parent information newsletter.

Sample Newsletter

A Renewed English Language Arts Curriculum

Saskatchewan Learning has recently provided a renewed English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum guide for Saskatchewan schools (January 2002). The renewed English Language Arts curriculum for Saskatchewan schools emphasizes the role of language in communication and learning. Students in the 21st century need to become confident and competent users of all six language arts. They need many opportunities to listen and speak to develop their oral language skills and strategies. They need many opportunities to read and write to develop their language skills and strategies related to print. They also need opportunities to view and represent to develop their visual and other perceptual communication skills and strategies.

To nurture and maximize every student's language acquisition and development, the renewed ELA curriculum advocates that teachers:

- build on what students know and can do with language and help students build a sense of confidence and capability
- create meaningful units, purposeful activities, and a supportive language environment for students to learn the language skills and strategies that they need
- attend to all the language cueing systems (i.e., pragmatic, textual, syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic) as well as the conventions and rules of language usage (including phonics, word recognition, spelling, punctuation, and handwriting) in meaningful contexts
- employ a range of effective teaching-learning approaches and strategies including direct instruction, guided instruction, and independent activities and model the before, during, and after skills and strategies that effective communicators use
- help students understand and access a range of resources (including prose fiction and nonfiction, poetry, plays, non-print and human resources)
- use appropriate assessment, evaluation, and reporting procedures
- recognize the developmental nature of language learning.

How Can You Support Your Child in the English Language Arts?

School is only one of the many influences in a child's language development. Parents, caregivers, and communities contribute greatly to their children's achievement. Parents, caregivers, and communities can and do make a major difference in helping children to be successful at school.

When children use language in real and important ways, their language development is enhanced. Model and encourage your child as he or she develops oral language, reading and writing, and viewing and representing skills. Demonstrate daily the importance of language in your home and community and help your child develop his or her language skills and strategies through practice and encouragement in a variety of situations. Some examples follow:

- Talk with and listen to your child about daily events and topics of interest to him or her. Encourage conversation at home by discussing highlights of the day and by listening carefully to your child without interrupting.
- Encourage your child's ability to imagine and tell stories as well as to act out stories in plays or puppet shows with friends and family.
- Play rhyming, word, spelling and memory games and sing songs.
- Read to and share with your child daily reading and writing tasks such as notes, cards, letters, shopping lists, newspapers, magazines, telephone books, food labels, advertisements, and maps.
- Talk about visual and multimedia elements used in communication including signs, labels, logos, advertisements, billboards, television, and the Internet.
- Provide a variety of experiences for your child and stimulate thought and discussion about these experiences.
- Read aloud to your child often. Encourage him or her to discuss and ask questions about what he or she hears, sees, and thinks.
- Encourage your child to write lists, recipes, stories, explanations, and poems.
- Display your child's drawings and writings in your home.
- Find books to match your child's interest.
- Support your child's curiosity about oral, print, and visual language.
- Talk about what your child is watching on television or the Internet.
- Put together a family video, slide show, or photo album with written or oral comments or captions.
- Set aside special language learning times. Turn off the TV or computer to talk, read, or help your child with homework.
- Trust and believe in your child's ability to be a successful language learner. Instill confidence and self-esteem by commenting on the strengths and focusing on realistic goals for improvement.

Whatever the activity, the important idea is that parents, caregivers, and children enjoy learning together. By listening to and with, reading and viewing with, as well as by talking and writing with children, parents and caregivers support the development of language abilities.